

**SPECIAL JOINT MEETING
TIPPECANOE COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
TIPPECANOE COUNTY COUNCIL
NOVEMBER 7, 2002**

The Tippecanoe County Commissioners and Tippecanoe County Council met in a special joint meeting on Thursday, November 7, 2002 at 11:30 A.M. in the Tippecanoe Room in the County Office Building. Commissioners present were: President John L. Knochel, Vice President KD Benson, and Member Ruth E. Shedd. Council members present were: President David S. Byers, Vice President Connie Basham, Margaret K. Bell, Ronald L. Fruitt, and Kathy Vernon; Auditor Robert A. Plantenga, Commissioners' Assistant Jennifer Weston, County Attorney David W. Luhman, and Secretary Pauline E. Rohr. (Councilmember Jeffrey A. Kemper was absent.)

State Representative Sheila Klinker was also present.

President Knochel called the County Commissioners' meeting to order.

APPROVAL OF CLAIM

- Upon the recommendation of Commissioners' Assistant Weston, Commissioner Shedd moved to approve a claim from the City of Lafayette in the amount of \$4,300,000 from the Cum Bridge Fund for the first of three installments for the Twyckenham Bridge Project, seconded by Commissioner Benson; motion carried.

APPOINTMENTS: Common Wage Board

- Commissioner Benson moved to appoint Roy Meeks to the Common Wage Board for the proposed West Lafayette Public Library Project and the City of West Lafayette 2002 Curb and Sidewalk Project, seconded by Commissioner Shedd; motion carried.

OTHER BUSINESS

Commissioner Shedd reported that the City of Lafayette and Wayne Township are interested in an additional ambulance if the County has used ones available. Commissioner Benson mentioned that TEMA is interested in an ambulance they can use for special events such as the Farm Progress Show. No action was taken.

President Byers called the County Council's meeting to order.

➔ Councilmember Jeffrey Kessler entered the meeting.

LOCAL LEGISLATORS: State Representative Sheila Klinker and Senators Ronnie Alting and Brandt Hershman

State Senators Brandt Hershman, Ronnie Alting, and Joe Harrison as well as State Representatives Sheila Klinker, Sue Scholer, and Tim Brown were invited to a luncheon meeting with the Tippecanoe County Council and Commissioners today. Association of Indiana Counties Legislative Representative David Bottorff was also invited. Senator Harrison declined the invitation since he will not represent any part of Tippecanoe County after 2002. Representatives Scholer and Brown were unable to attend because the House of Representatives' Republican Caucus was being held today.

The purpose of today's meeting with our local legislators is to alert them to issues and concerns of the County Council and County Commissioners with the hope that they will work for new legislation to address these concerns.

Representative Klinker said she was here to hear the Council's and Commissioners' concerns but she could not stay long since she had to return to a meeting in Indianapolis at 1:00 P.M. She stated she is happy to work on

Tippecanoe County's behalf for any issues we have.

Levy Cap

Commissioner Knochel said the County would like some relief on the 5% levy cap and the ability to shift funds in some revenue accounts.

Institutional Care

Councilmember Byers said he was going to use Auditor Plantenga's suggestion to ask for the setting of a rate for Institutional Care outside the Levy. This would allow us to clear our \$1 million debt to the DOC (Department of Corrections) for secure detention for juveniles and free up approximately \$800,000 in the General Fund Budget. Representative Klinker said she would be pleased to introduce a bill for this. Councilmember Byers said County Assessor Bob McKee also suggested setting a Reassessment rate outside the Levy.

Returning to the 5% cap issue, Commissioner Knochel said Tippecanoe County has grown more than 5% and the cap hinders us from keeping up with our expenses for providing services. Representative Klinker responded that the 5% cap is a political issue. She said it was put on in the Senate and they want to keep it. Auditor Plantenga interjected that the 5% is non-farm income and he thinks it would be beneficial if the cap were applied on an individual basis because it is difficult to operate a growing county with a 5% cap.

Juveniles in DOC Placement

Councilmember Basham asked Representative Klinker to work to get the juvenile judges more control over the length of stay for juveniles in DOC placement. Representative Klinker agreed that there are a lot of mandatory sentencings and actions for judges because the Legislature disagreed with what the judges thought was proper and took away the flexibility. She said she will bring up the issue of flexibility on behalf of the judges in regard to children in DOC placement. Attorney Luhman commented the length of placement also has a financial impact on the County. The judge no longer has jurisdiction over the juvenile in DOC placement but the county is still billed. He pointed out that this is not true of adult DOC placements.

➔ Senators Brandt Hershman and Ronnie Alting entered the meeting.

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Prosecutor

Councilmember Fruitt asked for consideration for a State-provided Prosecutor in counties with a State supported university. The workload is greater because of the large student population and the associated problems, and he is sure our Prosecutor can provide data on the numbers related to Purdue University.

Absentee Ballots

Nora Jarmon, Registrar Board of Election and Registration, said there was a problem with absentee ballots on demand optical scan due to an error during the November 5th election. She explained that the law currently states that a ballot cannot actually be cast prior to the election. If this law were changed, in-house early voting at the Courthouse could be done on the touch screen system rather than with the absentee ballot to alleviate this problem in future elections. Senator Hershman, a member of the Election Reform Committee, admitted that the law has to catch up with technology and said he is willing to work for this change.

In response to a question about reimbursement for new voting equipment, Commissioner Benson reported that the Commissioners passed a resolution at their November 4th meeting authorizing the application for reimbursement of voting equipment funds.

High Speed Rail

Representative Klinker mentioned that Dana Smith, Chamber of Commerce, and Liz Solberg, Railroad Relocation, are meeting later today to discuss high speed rail funding. They are hoping to receive matching funds from the State. Senator Alting, a member of the Railroad Safety Corridor Committee, interjected that no money is budgeted for this in the 2003 INDOT Budget.

➔ Representative Klinker left the meeting.

County Homes

Terrie Hively, Villa Director and President of Indiana County Home Association, appealed to Senators Hershman and Alting to help restore the line item in the FSSA (Family Social Service Agency) Budget in the amount of \$4.2 million for County Homes. She said 400 Hoosiers were denied access to county homes because State money to those institutions has been frozen and no new admissions allowed for Medicaid recipients. However, for-profit homes have been allowed to increase their per diems and accept Medicaid admissions. Mrs. Hively said State Senator Connie Lawson from Hendricks County is Chair of the Committee working to restore funding.

Senator Hershman said he visited the White County Home and thinks it is our responsibility to protect our most vulnerable citizens. Senator Alting agreed and said he and Senator Hershman will work closely with Senator Lawson to move this through the Senate.

RECESSED/RECONVENED

The Council and Commissioners recessed for lunch furnished by RQAW and represented by Tammy Wiest. The meeting reconvened at approximately 1:15 P.M.

Gas Tax Increase

Commissioner Benson said she hoped the Senators will support a gas tax hike to fund road repairs.

Highway Executive Director Mark Albers said he is concerned with two Federal EPA regulations, Wetland Mitigation and Phase II NPDES permitting. He said the reduction of Wetland Mitigation from 1/3 acre to 1/10 acre could mean mitigation on a bridge project for a side ditch with cattails. It seems unnecessary to him to deal with mitigation issues on local replacement projects. The permitting process for Phase II NPDES will cost additional dollars for sweeping streets, cleaning out structures, and constructing and maintaining sediment basins. He said these are Federal regulations with no funding help.

Detention Facility

Commissioner Benson said Tippecanoe County is going to be faced with providing a secure detention facility for our juveniles. She wondered if the EDIT levy can be increased to help fund the building as well as the operating expenses if necessary. Senator Hershman responded that it will be a difficult budget year and he is not sure how many revenue enhancements the Finance Chairman will discuss. President Byers argued that if we had a funding source outside our Levy, we could pay the DOC the \$1 million we owe and use our General Fund dollars for other purposes. He thinks it would be a win win situation for the County and the State.

Senator Hershman asked how much we are currently spending for juveniles. Councilmember Byers estimated the County is spending \$4 million per year on juveniles. If we had a secure detention facility, Councilmember Basham thinks some revenue would be generated by placements from surrounding counties.

Senator Alting suggested conducting a feasibility study for Tippecanoe and surrounding counties to determine the economics of building a facility. Councilmember Basham said this process has already been initiated.

Councilmember Byers acknowledged it will be a tough budget year and wondered if there is something the County should be looking for to help. Senator Alting said we need to work jointly to bring in new business and

thinks the phase out of the Inventory Tax will be a plus. Both Senators agreed that we need leadership from our Governor and improved State administration.

Food & Beverage Tax and Gas Tax

Councilmember Basham said the Food & Beverage Tax is on the books and has been discussed for Tippecanoe County in the past. Senator Alting stressed the need for the blessing of the restaurant owners before bringing the request for a Food & Beverage Tax to the General Assembly.

Senator Hershman thinks it will be difficult to pass back to back Gas Tax hikes. Senator Alting agreed.

Councilmember Kessler said he advocates Fiscal Home Rule to address local funding issues. He thinks we need to offer incentives to retain Indiana graduates in our work force. Councilmember Kessler objects to unfounded mandates such as the recently announced mandate to increase Probation Officer salaries. He would like to see more options for lower insurance costs and DOC juvenile placement costs outside the Levy.

Tax Increases

Councilmember Fruitt asked how secondary education will be funded. Senator Hershman explained that 60% of the school general fund will be funded by the State Sales Tax increase. The Gambling Tax increase, lottery proceeds, is shared revenue by all Indiana counties, not just counties with gambling boats. Senator Alting thinks the distribution to counties without boats will increase.

Comments

Councilmember Kessler complimented Senators Alting and Hershman for attacking problems, not people. He thinks they work well together in and with the Legislature.

Councilmember Vernon thanked the Senators for their support to Ivy Tech and their accessibility. Senator Alting responded that they are the messengers to sell what their constituents want.

Commissioner Knochel thanked the Senators for taking this time to listen to the Council and Commissioners. Senator Alting encouraged representatives to lobby for their interests in the hallways at the Statehouse. He said they need to know how their constituents feel.

ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Benson moved to adjourn, seconded by Commissioner Shedd; motion carried.

RECESSED

The Council recessed until 2:00 P.M.

BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS OF THE COUNTY OF TIPPECANOE

John L. Knochel, President

KD Benson, Vice President

Ruth E. Shedd, Member

ATTEST:

Robert A. Plantenga, Auditor